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BABYLONIAN ORIGIN OF HERMES THE SNAKE-
GOD, AND OF THE CADUCEUS

I.

THE study I have for sometime been making of Medusa,¹ which has shown her to have originally been an important figure in pre-Olympian Hellenic cosmogony and cult, a figure which was afterward absorbed in a subordinate rôle by the Olympian system, has led me, I believe, to solve also the problem of the origin and real character of Hermes and his *Kerykeion*.

Hermes was, like Medusa, a pre-Olympian. He also was admitted on sufferance into the new Olympian pantheon, curtailed of his real functions, and made to do service of less importance than when, as a subsidiary Chthonic god, he formed part of the organized cosmogony of the primitive matriarchal system.²

I expect to show that the prototype of Hermes was an Oriental deity of Babylonian extraction; whose character was that of a god of spring; whose function it was to preside over fertilization; whose position was not that of a primal deity, but that of agent and messenger of the Great Mother, in whose domain he brought life to light in the springtime of each year, and so became also associated with the spring sun.

This proto-Hermes was always a snake-god, and before the era of complete anthropomorphism he was thought of in snake form. But it is an essential element of his function that he was not a single snake—for the great single Earth Snake was the Mother Goddess—but the double snake, male and female, the most prolific form of copulation in the animal kingdom.

For this reason the emblem of the god was the *Kerykeion* or caduceus, a pair of snakes wound around a wand or sceptre. But before it became the god's emblem, the caduceus had been,

¹ *A.J.A.* XV, 1911, pp. 349 ff.; XIX, 1915, pp. 13 ff.

² I read a preliminary paper, in which I outlined my conclusion, before the American Philological Association and the Archaeological Institute at their annual meeting at Haverford, in December 1914.

in the pre-anthropomorphic era, the god himself; and continued to be so regarded long after the prevalence of anthropomorphism.¹ The Caduceus-god was, therefore, the predecessor of the Priapic herm-god. The two-sex snakes conveyed the same idea as the phallus. The phallic god appears to have been unknown to the early Oriental form of the cult and to have been introduced by those who mediated the Hermes cult to Greece.²

The subject must, then, be approached by way of its fundamental element, the *Kerykeion*; but, first of all it will clear the ground to epitomize the past and present attitude of scholarship toward both Hermes and the *Kerykeion*.

It is an interesting step in the right direction that the phallic and nature character of the primitive Hermes is by way of being more clearly recognized and that some value is given to the traces of his pre-Olympian origin in the literature of the late Roman period, which revived in philosophical form so many persistent primitive popular traditions. A typical judgment of this sort is that of Farnell³ in his elaborate study of the cult of Hermes. Farnell feels that while Hermes "appears to us as a Hellene of the Hellenes" he yet "may be a surviving figure of a pre-Hellenic religion." He favors the Pelasgic derivation of the Arcadian Hermes cult, which is the aboriginal source for Hellas, and in which the phallic nature is pronounced, with Pan as the son of Hermes. The attractive resemblance between Maia, the mother of Hermes, and Mâ, the Mother Goddess of Cappadocia and Bithynia, suggests the Anatolian derivation of Hermes. But, while Farnell favors an original non-Hellenic and phallic Hermes, he fails to correlate him correctly with the *Kerykeion*, for he believes it to be of purely Hellenic origin and character, without connection with the nature-Hermes, a simple implement evolved out of a shepherd's crook adopted by heralds as their staff.⁴

Modern German scholarship has not gone even as far as Farnell on the right road. Its most recent and authoritative verdict,

¹ Pre-anthropomorphism is hardly correct as a chronological statement; it is of course rather a matter of a state of mind than of a date.

² At the same time the phallic character was made evident by the ithyphallic figures supporting or flanking the caduceus on Babylonian cylinders, e.g., Ward, fig. 481, from a cylinder in the British Museum.

³ *The Cults of the Greek States*, Vol. V (Oxford, 1909), pp. 1 ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20, where he remarks that there is no need to derive this simple implement, as some have done, from Phoenicia, or, as Sir William Ramsay derives it, from Phrygia.

that of Stein in the Pauly-Wissowa *Reallexicon*, is conservative, treating Hermes as a purely Hellenic creation, though granting that his original character was that of a god of fruitfulness in nature, in its three forms—human, animal and vegetable. He agrees with Farnell in regarding the male organ of generation as the primitive emblem of Hermes, and the *Kerykeion* as merely the herald's staff: "der Heroldstab in engerem Sinne."¹

The conventional view of the *Kerykeion* has been held, practically without change, ever since the time of K. O. Müller, and may be considered as expressed with the greatest detail and authority in Roscher.² The caduceus wand is held to be the shepherd's crook decorated in the course of time with the snakes and with ribbons. If this were so it would be a late adjunct to the paraphernalia of Hermes and quite unconnected with his early phallic and nature cult. Also, in this interpretation of Roscher, the divinatory, magical, lifegiving powers of the wand, so clearly to be traced in Greek literature and art, are made quite secondary

¹ Stein says in the beginning (p. 774): "Am tiefsten scheint seine Bedeutung als Gott der Fruchtbarkeit zu liegen. Im elischen Kyllene u. vielleicht auch auf dem arkadischen Gebirge gleichen Namens wurde er als Phallos dargestellt (Paus. VI, 26,5; Artemidor, I, 45; Lucian, *Supp. tr.* 42 u. ö)." The treatment of the caduceus in the part of the P. W. article devoted to the archaeological material is, however, extremely interesting and suggestive and will be quoted in a note to p. 178.

² Müller, in *Arch. der Kunst*, p. 504, stated that the caduceus was originally the olive-branch with the *στέμματα* which were afterwards developed into serpents. The article in Roscher (p. 2365) is by Scherer, who says: "Als Symbol seiner Heroldswürde führte H. das sogenannte *κηρύκειον*, das ursprünglich gewiss die einfache Gestalt eines Hirtenstabes oder eines *σκήπτρον* hatte, wie es die homerischen Herolde führen (*Il.* H. 277, Diod. 5, 75), später aber in mannigfacher Weise verziert wurde (Preller, *Philol.* 1, 512 f. = *Ausgew. Aufs.* 147 ff.). Da solche Stäbe in der Regel von Gold oder doch mit Gold verziert waren, so erhielt H. davon schon in sehr alter Zeit das Epitheton *χρυσόραπης* (*Od.* e 87 u. ö.). Hie und da legte man diesem Stabe auch mantische (*Schol. Il.* o 256) oder magische Kraft bei, indem man glaubte, dass der Gott mit demselben einschläferen oder wecke (*Il.* Ω 343. *Od.* ε 47, ω 2), oder die Seelen der Verstorbenen hinter sich her in die Unterwelt hinabziehe (*Od.* ω 5 f.; Verg. *Aen.* 4, 243; Hor. *Car.* 1, 10, 18), oder endlich Verwandlungen bewirke (Antonin. Liber. 10, etc.). Auf den Mythos, dass H. diesen Stab vom Apollon erhalten habe (*Hy. in Merc.* 529; *Schol. Il.* Σ 256) ist nach meiner Ansicht nichts zu geben, da er ihm schon als Götterherold ursprünglich eignen musste. [Ueber das *κηρύκειον* vgl. Böttiger, 'Über die vorgeblichen Schlangen am Mercuriusstabe,' *Amalthea* 1, p. 104–116; Preller, 'Der Hermesstab,' *Philologus* 1, p. 512–522; L. Müller, *Hermes-Stavens Oprindelse* (see *Arch. Anz.* 1866, p. 219–24).]"

to its heraldic function. In Figure 1, Hermes, represented as evoking souls, carries both kerykeion and rhabdos. The entire process of evolution of the wand



FIGURE 1.—HERMES, ON A JENA LECYTHUS (Harrison, *Themis*, p. 295)

is supposed to have taken place within the Hellenic sphere.

This frivolous and futile theory, that the snakes of the Kerykeion were merely decorative and quite devoid of meaning, has never been seriously questioned, I believe,¹ except by Miss Harrison, who has come closer than any writer to sensing the

¹In this connection it will be interesting to quote from 'Hermes' in the Pauly Wissowa, under 'Hermes in der Kunst,' p. 764: "In der Hand trägt der Gott gewöhnlich d. für ihn charakteristischen Stab (*ράβδος, κηρύκειον*),

der entweder wie ein ganz einfacher Stab gezeichnet wird oder gewöhnlich an dem nicht gehaltenen Ende eine eigentümlich gespaltene und gewundene, verschiedentlich variierte Form aufweist, die von mächtig ausladenden hornartigen Spitzen allmählich das Aussehen einer 8-Zahl (mit dem oberen Zirkel geschlossen oder geöffnet, auch zweimal über sich selbst gestellt), annimmt—man fasse den Stab als Hirtenstab, Heroldstab oder (wahrscheinlicher) Zauberstab—oder endlich als eine Kombination dieser Elemente auf (den wahrscheinlich orientalischen Ursprung des Zwieselstabes hat man aus phönikischem, hettitischem oder mesopotamischen Kulturkreise ableiten wollen, vgl. L. Müller, *Gesellsch. d. Wiss.*, Kopenhagen, 1864, 171 ff. u. O. A. Hoffmann, *Hermes und Kerykeion*, 1890), Münsterberg, *Arch. Epig. Mitth.* XV, 141 ff. Jedenfalls existiert die Möglichkeit, dass der Künstler dem Stabe je nach der verschiedenen Situation verschiedentliche Bedeutung unterlegte. Er kann auch dem H. in die eine Hand das Kerykeion, in die andere einen gewöhnlichen Stab geben. Zuweilen ist das K. mit heiligen Wollenbinden geschmückt (um so den Sinn der Zauberknöten des Stabendes hervorzuheben?), auf der Memnonschale (*Wien. Vorleg.* 1890–1, Taf. 10. Head *H. N.* 81). Auch eine stilisierte Blume sieht man in seltenen Fällen in der Hand des Gottes . . . und das K. endet auch in Blütenspitzen bei Furtwängler *Vasenkatal.* Berl. 494."

I have been unable to obtain a copy of a dissertation published in 1913 by R. Boetzkes, *Das Kerykeion* (Münster, 1913), to which my attention has been called by my friend W. Sherwood Fox.

real nature both of Hermes and his emblem. Her study of Hellenic snake worship in *Themis* must be referred to by anyone wishing to understand how fundamental and persistent an aspect this was of real Greek religion. Miss Harrison has divined that Hermes was a snake god in his original form, but she was unable to find the proof of it, or to see the duality of the snake form as essential. It goes without saying that she was not cognizant of the Oriental connections.

Miss Harrison, in *Themis*, p. 266, conjectures that the archaic cult-image of Hermes in the old temple of Athena Polias on the Acropolis was "like the Hermes of Kyllene, an *αἰδοῖον*, possibly snake-shaped." On p. 294 she regards Hermes as a humanized form of the snake life-daimon, the Agathos Daimon. On p. 295 she goes so far as to say: "He [Hermes], a snake to begin with and carrying always the snake-staff, is the very *daimon* of reincarnation." Again, on p. 297 we read: "Hermes, as Agathos Daimon, was once merely a *phallos*; that he was also once merely a snake, is, I think, a safe conjecture. But it is merely a conjecture: I can point to no actual monument where Hermes is figured as a snake." Of course this was inevitable, as Hermes was never a single snake: only a double two-sexed snake.

As first planned, the present paper was to have presented in the first place the Greco-Roman material; then the Etruscan; then the Hittite-Syrian and finally the Babylonian. The advantage of this plan was that it led to the Oriental origin by stages so gradual as to overcome the scepticism that seems to envelop many minds whenever the Oriental origin of anything Hellenic is asserted. I shall, however, adopt the simpler plan of beginning with the earliest representations in graphic art of the *Kerykeion* (which I shall henceforth call "caduceus") and the caduceus-god, and shall not introduce the Hermes question *per se* until it forces itself into the arena.

I. THE BABYLONIAN AND HITTITE CADUCEUS

It is to the acumen of Dr. William Hayes Ward¹ that we owe the discovery of the presence of the caduceus on Babylonian cylinders of the ancient empire and other cylinders of Western Asia.

¹ Ward (William Hayes), *The Seal cylinders of Western Asia*, Washington, 1910 (The Carnegie Institution). Nearly all my illustrations are taken from this work.

They place the origin of the emblem at least as early as the millennium between 3000 and 4000 B.C. His demonstration was decisive, even though he might have increased its value by drawing more detailed mythological conclusions. It was natural that he should not in such a work concern himself with its bearing on the origin of Hermes. Dr. Ward summarizes his evidence under the heading *The Caduceus*, in his list of emblems of deities to be found on the cylinders (p. 408): "This important emblem, called a candelabrum by Ménant, is not infrequent on Babylonian cylinders, especially of the Middle Empire. It does not appear in the Assyrian or Syro-Hittite figures. It consists of two serpents rising from a vertical stem, with imperfect bodies and heads thrown outward. The neck is thickened like that of the Egyptian asp. Between the two serpents is often a vase . . . but this is not always clear nor always present The object . . . may be pointed, to be set up

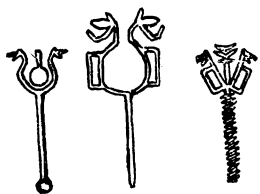


FIGURE 2.—WARD, p. 408

in the ground. Its serpentine character is discovered by comparing it with the single serpent as in Fig. 427 or in Fig. 31 [my Fig. 27], where the god carries the serpent as a rod over his shoulder. . . . This emblem is held in the hand of Ishtar Doubtless this caduceus, which may be the source of the Greek caduceus, was originally conceived of as a weapon."

In Figure 2 are the three types of caduceus on Babylonian cylinders selected by Dr. Ward to illustrate the above remarks. In Figure 27 is the single serpent used as a divine emblem held by a god over his shoulder; and in Figs. 6, 24, 26, 31, 32, 33, 36 held with the head down as an emblem which is probably the prototype of the *harpê*, for it practically was given the *harpê* form in Assyrian art (see Fig. 37).

In the following study I do not accept two of Dr. Ward's statements in the passage just quoted. The first is that the caduceus does not appear either in Assyrian or in Syro-Hittite cylinders. While this is true of Assyrian cylinders, where the Tree of Life seems to have replaced the caduceus, it does appear in a considerable number of the Syro-Hittite cylinders illustrated by Dr. Ward himself, and in the descriptive text he himself calls them caducei. So we do not really disagree. His statement was a mere inadvertance, which he would be the first to recognize.

The second point is his suggestion that the Babylonian caduceus was originally a weapon. This idea may be due to the emphasis placed by Dr. Ward on the warlike character of the goddess Ishtar. There is, however, complete agreement among scholars that Ishtar was primarily a nature goddess and that her warlike aspect was a later secondary evolution. Dr. Ward also sees a weapon in the bulbs which I shall try to prove fruits of the Tree of Life.

I shall include the other works beside cylinders on which the caduceus is found, such as the Gudea vase and the limestone reliefs.

The Caduceus and the God Ningishzida.—There are two main groups of cylinders and reliefs on which we find a caduceus. In one group it is an independent emblem; in the other group it is held by a god. In the first case it is of large size, usually as large as the human or divine figures of the same cylinder; in the second case it is usually quite small, like a sceptre or wand.

The former group must be studied first. It falls into two subdivisions: (1) that in which it is plainly an object of worship, being flanked or held by genii, or demi-gods; (2) that in which it stands alone, though associated with correlated figures or emblems.

The first illustration (Fig. 3) is the famous vase of green steatite found at Telloh (Lagash) and now in the Louvre.¹ It is a libation vase, dedicated, according to the archaic inscription that crosses its figures, to the god Ningishzida by Gudea, *patesi* or ruler of the city and state of Lagash. The chief deity of Lagash was Nin-girsu, a solar deity. This is made plain by

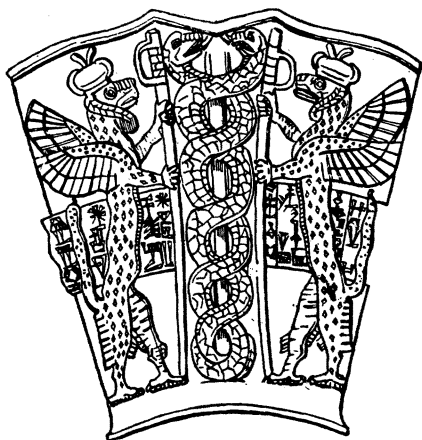


FIGURE 3.—GUDEA'S LIBATION VASE
(= Ward 368c)

¹ De Sarzec, *Découvertes en Chaldée* (Paris, 1883), pl. 44, Fig. 2, pp. 234-236; Heuzey, *Coll. d'antiquités chaldéennes* (Paris, 1902), pp. 280-284; Jastrow, *Aspects of Religious Belief in Babylonia and Assyria*, pl. 4.

numerous monuments and inscriptions. Ningishzida was a subordinate deity, the special patron of Gudea, whom he is represented in several works as presenting to the chief deity, Nin-girsu, very much as in works of Christian art an emperor, king, or bishop is being presented to Christ by Saint Peter. The dedicatory inscription in itself would tend to show that this patron of Gudea is portrayed on the vase. The subject is a mystic adoration scene. The centre is occupied by a large caduceus which stands upright and unsupported. It is formed of a wooden staff which we may imagine as pointed and stuck into the ground. The artist has carefully indicated the bark of the tree. The two snakes face each other with open mouths at the top of the staff. At its base their tails interlace. Their scales and heads are well marked. This is the god Ningishzida. He is being adored by two composite genii, standing at attention and holding each a long ritual lance-like or sword-like staff with a handle which they do not grasp, and which is exactly like one held by a figure like that of the hero Gilgamesh when in attendance on some deity.¹ The dissection of these hybrid genii would indicate that they are a composite of the different animals and birds currently used as divine symbols and attendants, both solar and chthonic: the scorpion, the serpent, the eagle and the lion, though the serpent dominates in head and body.² The dedicatory inscription to the god is interrupted by their bodies.

The objection to considering the caduceus to be the god himself instead of merely his emblem can be set aside for various reasons. The first is derived from the name of the god. *Nin-gish-zida* is translated as meaning "God of the Right hand Sceptre" or more exactly "Right-hand Sceptre God."³ This describes the caduceus-god perfectly. He is a subordinate or ancillary deity; an instrument in the service of a principal deity, taking the form of a sceptre held in this deity's right hand. We shall see later that the caduceus is held in the right hand either of the Mother Goddess (Ishtar) or, more rarely, of the Sun-god (Shamash).

It would be interesting to determine the date of this libation vase. If it is not possible as yet with exactness, it may be said that while in one book Dr. Jastrow dates its dedicator, King

¹ Ward, p. 378, figs. 648, 205, 289, 284; cf. 285, 286.

² The head and trunk are serpentine; the claws of the hind-feet, beside the wings, are the eagle's; the tail is the scorpion's; the fore-feet are the lion's.

³ In the Adapa legend it is abbreviated to Gishzida.

Gudea, *ca.* 2350 B.C., in another he places him a *thousand* years earlier in *ca.* 3300.¹ The consensus of opinion places Gudea between 3000 and 4000 B.C.

Before proceeding further, I must reproduce all Gudea's known representations of this caduceus-god Ningishzida and a few others related to them because they show that in his time, which we may roughly reckon as *ca.* 3500 B.C., this god's personality had already been evolved from a pre-anthropomorphic to an anthropomorphic form through a series of stages the study of which provides, I believe, the first instance of such an evolution proved by monuments. It is an evolution that has been supposed, that has been preached, but that has not thus far been proved by monuments. The fact that under Gudea both the earlier animal and the later human form were used is probably due to a conservatism that maintained the archaic and traditional pre-anthropomorphism by the side of the form that appealed to the more developed religious ideas.

The theme on the seal cylinder of King Gudea (Ward, Fig. 368a), as it can be studied in an impression on a tablet now in the Louvre, is very clear in the rôle it assigns to



FIGURE 4—(=Ward 368a)

Ningishzida (Fig. 4). The supreme god—Nin-girsu, Ea or Shamash—is seated on a throne. From his shoulders flow two streams of water into vases standing on the ground. It is from him that the element of moisture in the earth is derived. In his right hand he is holding out a vase overflowing with two streams, and crowned by the triple flower emblem of fertility, to an approaching secondary deity, identifiable by the two snakes that project, one from behind each shoulder. This god is receiving the vase in his left hand while with his right he is leading and presenting to the principal god the King, Gudea. Behind Gudea is a goddess, the consort of the principal god, and behind her the winged and horned lion, a solar emblem. The introducing god is identified as Ningishzida not only by the snakes, but because Gudea in his

¹ Jastrow, *Aspects of Religious Belief*, p. 14, 426, for the date *ca.* 2350; and his *Die Religion Babyloniens und Assyriens*, I, 36 for the date *ca.* 3300.

inscriptions calls him "my god" and says that "he takes me by the hand and leads me into the presence of [name of god]."¹

The scene shows Ningishzida mediating to the Kingdom of Gudea the fertilizing waters that are the gift of Ea, or Shamash or whoever is the main deity. A similar scene is given on a fragmentary relief of Gudea in which the god is mostly missing, but Ningishzida, with his shoulders sprouting serpents, is leading the King (Fig. 5) whom he grasps by the hand. This single figure is given enlarged in Figure 7a. He is preceded by another introducing deity with a long pendant staff. This relief is on a limestone panel in the Berlin Museum,² which is mutilated on the right side. It is possible to make out a stream of water;



FIGURE 5.—LIMESTONE TABLET OF GUDEA (=Ward 368d)

part of the throne of the god; the head of a lion beside the throne, and a bearded attendant behind it. In one of Gudea's inscriptions,³ quoted by Dr. Ward, it is said of him that as he approached his supreme god Nin-girsu⁴ in his temple: "the god Lugal-Kurdub went before him, the god Gal-alim followed him; Ningishzida, his god, held him by the hand." There is no doubt, then, that the god with a serpent sprouting from each shoulder who grasps Gudea's hand in the tablet and on the seal is the god Ningishzida. Neither can it be

doubted that it is Ningishzida who is represented by the caduceus on Gudea's libation vase. Now Dr. Ward (pp. 128–

¹ Ward, *The Seal Cylinders*, p. 127–128, 215, 376, Heuzey, *Sceau de Goudéa*, in *Rev. d'Assyriologie*, v. 135; VI, 95. For the inscriptions of Gudea see also, De Sarzec, *Découvertes*; Thureau-Dangin, *Sumerisch-Akkadische Königsinschriften*; Jastrow, *Die Religion B. u. A. I.*, p. 79, 92, 93, 395; II, 955.

² King, *History of Sumer and Akkad*, Fig. 12, p. 47; Meyer (Ed.), *Sumerier u. Semiten in Babylonien*, pl. VII; Ward, Fig. 368d.

³ Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 128; Gudea's Cylinder A col. 28, 14–17 in De Sarzec, *Déc. Thureau-Dangin*, *op. cit.*, etc.

⁴ It seems probable that the principal god here is not Ea or Shamash, but Ningirsu, because in Gudea's hymn (Jastrow, *Die Religion* etc., I, 395) to Ningirsu the god is said to be a mighty lion and to rule the deep, and in his dream (Jastrow II, 955) he sees two lions flanking the god's throne, just as in the relief.

130) has very cleverly seen the connection with two cylinders which he reproduces, without, however, pointing out that they represent two successive stages in the evolution from the serpent-pair to the man-snake-pair.

In the first cylinder, now in the J. P. Morgan library in New York (Ward, Fig. 368*b*), given in Figure 6, with the main figure enlarged in Figure 7*a*, we are presented with a Lazarus-like human figure, helplessly wound up in the coils of the two serpents and perhaps the most archaic form of the man-god, that which is the nearest anthropomorphic approach to the original plain snake-spirit. On the cylinder is a line of deities. On the extreme left is Ningishzida in the form of this stiff, slender image, front face, resting not on human feet but on the tails of two serpents whose



FIGURE 6.—(= Ward 368*b*)



FIGURE 7.—(a) and (b) = Ward p. 376

coils are wound tightly about the body in winding spirals, with heads that project from behind the shoulders on either side in exactly the same way as in the Ningishzida of Figures 4 and 5. The god has his arms close to his body with hands folded on his breast. It is like a primitive *xoanon*, with nothing to indicate the usual drapery or feet back of the serpent folds, only a cubiform sheath. The quasi-human figure simply takes the place of the wand of the vase of Gudea in the caduceus composition. The tail ends seem bent over to form a sort of tripod base; or else the base is an independent design to support the image. These are the two forms of the god as an object of worship. As a god in action, however, his limbs would have to be freed from the coils and only the serpent heads and necks would appear, growing from his shoulders. Though this *xoanon* figure is, so far as I am aware, unique, the idea must have been fairly common, for it is

reproduced in Hellenistic and Roman times in the Persian Mithraic iconography of the supreme god Zervane, the god of fire and heat, whose figure is encircled by a coiled serpent. Next to the god Ningishzida on the cylinder is a figure of the nude goddess of exactly corresponding character: hieratic, immobile, front-faced, with hands pressed to her breasts. She is the fruitful principle of the earth mother. Her name is uncertain. She is called Belit by Menant, Zarpanit by others.¹ In the cylinder (Fig. 35) on p. 202, she is placed beneath the caduceus, so that the juxtaposition is significant and intentional. She may be called the fecundity element in the all-mother Ishtar, as Ningishzida is the fecundating element in the spring sun. A fragmentary cuneiform text says of the goddess Belit-ili (?) that her breast is filled with milk and that the lower part of her body is that of a serpent.



FIGURE 8.—(=Ward 368b)

The same text speaks of the god Ea as having a serpent's head, and though this does not appear in any known monuments it is interesting as emphasizing the Babylonian connection between moisture and the serpent.²

The second cylinder (Ward, 368b), also in the Morgan collection, illustrates the succeeding stage (Fig. 8). Ningishzida stands facing the spectator in the same stiff attitude as of an image, not a living person. But the two serpents are uncoiled, the human body is made perfectly human by the addition of feet on which it is firmly planted, and the body from the waist down is expanded to normal width with a roughly flounced robe. The long snakes are held in each hand above the middle, hanging almost straight but so as to form the outline of the god below. They cross just above the waist so that their heads flank the

¹ Beyond "Belit" is the worshipper and further on a deity, who must be thought of as standing in front of Ningishzida.

² Ward, p. 131; Bezold in *Zeit. f. Assyriol.*, IX, p. 116. The cylinders which represent a deity that is human above the waist and is in the form of the coils of a single snake below the waist, like the Hellenic Cecrops, make this deity always male and bearded: Ward, Figs. 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367. The only unbearded example is Fig. 368. In Fig. 367 the god has Sun-rays on his shoulders.

god's face quite closely.¹ The transformation to an anthropomorphic god is here almost complete: complete except for two facts, that the god has not yet been fused with his life-source, the two snakes, and that, therefore, he cannot yet move and act. But this last step was taken in the creation of the type in Figures 4 and 5, where the god lives and moves in his human form.

It is important in this cylinder to study the other figures and emblems, because they will be found to belong entirely to the class of life-producers; and to give, for this reason, the strongest confirmation of my interpretation of the caduceus-god. We may, in the first place, eliminate the figure on the extreme left. He is merely the worshipper. Between him and Ningishzida is the orb of the sun inside the crescent moon, below them the seven circles of the Pleiades, and at the bottom the Egyptian ankh or symbol of life. On the other side of Ningishzida is a group which Dr. Ward has refrained from describing, though it is not only unique but of extraordinary value. It seems to represent the original *connubium* of the god and the goddess. The nude goddess (Zirpanit ?), standing as usual in front view, with drapery withdrawn indicated by a double base line and single side lines. Her left arm is extended to clasp the shoulder or neck of the god, who is advancing toward her with his right arm grasping her under the arm and his left hand extended to touch her drapery. Above them is the star representing either the Sun or the planet Ishtar. As a frame beyond is the Tree of Life surmounted by three animals like rabbits. This *connubium* of the male and female principles at the beginning of the evolution of the universe is described in the remarkable cosmological tablet recently deciphered by Dr. Langdon, which has also been studied by Dr.

¹ In the very archaic and crude cylinder, Ward 120, is a front-faced figure holding out a long erect serpent in each hand, away from his body, isometrically. In Ward 139a, they flank the nude figure of a god with a club, but stand erect without being held by him. The god is solar. In Figure 9—see the next note—the two serpents are held in one hand. In Figure 38 is a similar use of the two snakes. It would be beside the mark to comment on the various forms of the single serpent on the cylinders, as in Ward 923. I will merely say that perhaps the single serpent explains the two staffs held by the genii in the Gudea vase: see Menant in *Cat. de la Coll. De Clercq*, pl. XV, 131, where a "Gilgamesh" stands behind the Moon god holding a long stiff serpent with arched neck as a staff, while in other cylinders the staff he holds is exactly like those of the Gudea genii: see p. 182 and note.

Jastrow.¹ It is the original act of which one may say that the caduceus-god is the propagator throughout the universe in the various forms of life. I cannot lay too much emphasis on the interest of this scene. The presence of the *ankh* and the Tree of Life is additional evidence in favor of the interpretation I am giving not only of this scene but of the whole caduceus problem.²

The myth is referred to by Jastrow (*Aspects*, etc., p. 130) in explaining the evolution of the idea of the interaction of sun and earth. "A similar deity [*i. e.* to the goddess Ishtar], symbolizing the earth as the source of vegetation—a womb wherein seed is laid—must have been worshipped in other centres, where the sun-cult prevailed. . . . The consort of the old solar deity Ninib represents this great female principle. Their union finds a striking expression in a myth which represents the pair, Ninib and Gula (or Bau), celebrating a formal marriage ceremony on the New Year's day (coincident with the vernal equinox) re-

ceiving wedding presents, and ushered into the bridal chamber with all the formalities incident to the marriage rite.

. . . . When, therefore, the Psalmist describes the sun (xix, 5) as 'Coming like a bridegroom from his bridal



FIGURE 9.—(= Ward, 823)

chamber,' he is using a metaphor derived from the old myth of the marriage of the Sun with the Earth in the happy springtime of nature's awakening." A Phoenician version of the divine marriage will be discussed on p. 209; see Figure 41.

¹ Among the Papers read at the meeting of the American Philological Association and Soc. of Biblical Exegesis at Columbia University on Dec. 28, 1915. Langdon, *Sumerian Epic of Paradise* (Bull. Mus. of U. of Pa. Babyl. Sect. X, 1), and N. Y. *Nation* of Nov. 18, 1915.

The marriage of the god and the goddess was commemorated by a festival. Gudea relates how he consecrates on this occasion marriage gifts in the temples. The festival was the spring festival called Zagnuku; Ward, p. 136.

² There is a peculiar Hittite cylinder (Ward 823), where a figure approaching the main deity holds by the neck in his right hand two serpents whose coils trail on the ground (Fig. 9). That this figure is a deity, though a subordinate one, is shown by the small size of the only human figure with hand raising a libation cup behind a sphinx or man-faced lion. Above him is the divine Bull with the sprig of the Tree of Life behind him and at the left end Gilgamesh kneeling and swinging the solar lion above his head. Whether the subordinate snake-swinging god is Ningishzida can be only a matter of opinion.

Having shown the evolutions of the forms of the caduceus-god we will now examine the representations of the caduceus as an independent emblem on the cylinders, but before doing so a short digression on the personality of Ningishzida as shown by Babylonian literary records is obviously necessary.

The only Babylonian ruler who mentions Ningishzida is the above-mentioned Gudea; and he, while naming this god as his patron, enumerates him at the end of his list of eighteen gods adored at Lagash (Shirpurla). Gudea has a dream which he asks the goddess Ninâ to interpret. She tells him that he has seen the supreme god, of colossal size, Ningirsu, crowned and with the sacred eagle, Im-gig, in his hand, the storm-wind at his feet and a lion crouching on either side: also a woman with a tablet and a man marking the plan of a temple on another tablet, showing that he should build a temple to Ningirsu. Then came a figure representing the rising sun, which the goddess identifies—after naming the others—as Ningishzida, saying: “The Sun which lifted itself up from the earth before thee, is thy god Ningishzida. Like the Sun he goes forth from the earth.”¹ In another passage Ningishzida is described as leading Gudea forth to battle and as his king. A separate temple was dedicated to his worship by Gudea.

It would seem as if this god's worship was largely local and disappeared with the advent of the official pantheon established by the priesthood of Babylon under the dynasty of Hammurabi (ca. 2000 B.C.). The other records of his cult are from two sources, both of them archaic and pre-Hammurabi: the omen and incantation tablets and the legend of Adapa. In the incantation texts he is called “Throne-bearer of the Earth.” His connection with the serpent is attested in a birth-omen given by Jastrow which says: “If a woman gives birth to a child with a serpent's head, it is an omen of Ningishzida, who will devastate the land; an omen of Gilgamesh, ruler of the Earth.” In another text Ningishzida sends fever through the land. He is said also to carry an axe as his symbol. In some magical texts where Ningishzida is among the minor solar deities invoked, it is not as a male but as a female deity and as the wife or consort of the sun.

¹Gudea, Cylinder A. 5; 19-20, in De Sarzec, *Découvertes*. For Ningishzida consult the index in Jastrow's three works: *The Religion of B. and A.*; *Die Religion B. u. A.*; and *Aspects of Rel. Bel.*, including the sources and authors there quoted.

gods Nusku or Ninib or even of Gibil the primitive Fire-god. In Jastrow's opinion Ningishzida was one of the insignificant secondary deities that tended to disappear and to be absorbed in the more powerful deities. In this case the absorber would be Ninib. This was natural because Ninib is called "the first-born of Ea" and also as the rising sun or the spring sun, the offspring of the Earth (or "E Kur"), because he ascended from below the earth surface. The association with Nusku, on the other hand, is due to Nusku's character as a messenger of Anu, the supreme god of heaven, and of all the gods. In this sense, perhaps, Ningishzida is called in one of Gudea's texts the "Son" of Anu (Cyl. B 23, 5) and bracketed with Bau, the daughter of Anu (Cyl. E 8, 12-13), who is the consort of Nin-girsu, the supreme god of Lagash, and is the Mother Goddess who gives birth to mankind. It is not improbable that in the *connubium* scene described on p. 187 the union is that of Nin-girsu and Bau. In Gudea's text quoted above, Ningishzida's mother is called Nin-Sun (Cyl. B, 23, 5-6).

In one of the incantation series, that of the "Evil demons," the *Utukki limnuti*, the god Ningishzida is called "the Herald of the Earth."¹ All these are disconnected allusions.

The only narrative text in which our god appears is the myth called the Adapa legend, in which Jastrow² sees a composite story made up (1) of a lament for the disappearance from earth of the two gods of vegetation, Tammuz and Ningishzida, who represent the sun-god of the spring and bring vegetation but are carried away from the Earth with the waning of summer: (2) of an adventure of a certain hero or god Adapa who is obliged to appear before the Supreme God of heaven, Anu, to answer the charge of having broken the wings of the south wind, which was an evil storm wind.³ The god of the deep, Ea, father or protector of Adapa, advises Adapa to seek the intervention of two gods, Tammuz and [Nin] Gishzida, the guardians of the gates of heaven. Adapa is to appear at the gate in mourning garb and

¹ Jastrow, *Die Religion* etc., I, 354.

² Jastrow, *The Religion*, pp. 544 ff.; text and translation in Winckler and Abel, *Thontafelfund von El-Amarna*, Vol. III; Harper, *Die Babylonischen Legenden von Etana, Zu, Adapa und Dibarra* (*Beitr. z. Assyr.* II).

³ This would seem to indicate that it was a fight of a solar hero against the storms of winter, in preparation for the return of spring, which would mean the return of Tammuz and Ningishzida to earth. This makes a logical nexus between the two parts of the story.

when asked the reason of his mourning is to answer: "Two gods have disappeared from our earth, therefore do I appear thus" and when he is asked who these two gods are he is to point out Tammuz and Ningishzida who will then intercede for him and take him to Anu. Now, in the early Babylonian calendar, the fourth month, or first month of spring, was sacred to Tammuz and the fifth month or second spring month to Ningishzida, while the sixth or first summer month was dedicated to the Mother Goddess Ishtar. The association of the two young gods of Spring is shown even in Gudea's list where Tammuz, in the form Dumuzi (or more fully Dumu-zi-abzu "Child of the deep"), is mentioned side by side with Ningishzida. Both were personifications of the springtime sun, coming out of the earth to put to flight the cold of winter and bring back life to the world. Both leave the earth as the summer closes and life wanes and their departure to the underworld, or to the gates of heaven, is mourned. They are like twin gods, but this twinship or similarity of function seems to have resulted in a confusion of sex. Sometimes Tammuz is the husband and Ningishzida the wife, and sometimes Ningishzida the husband and Tammuz the wife. Sometimes both are male, as when they are represented as the gate-keepers of the sun on the cylinders (*e. g.* Ward, Figs. 244 ff., esp. 269). In course of time Ningishzida fades away and only the earlier of the two spring gods, Tammuz, survives. The mourning is for Tammuz alone. The Mother Goddess Ishtar mourns for her lost lover Tammuz and seeks him in the regions below the earth, where he lies hidden in the winter time, seeking to bring him back in the spring to the waiting world so that by his means, she, the Great Mother, can bring life back again to all nature. Tammuz alone, therefore, became the prototype of Adonis, Attis and the rest of the lovers, emissaries and instruments of the Great Mother.¹

But before this elimination of Ningishzida, we can see in various early Babylonian cylinders and other works, representations of the twin youthful Sun-gods as the guardians of the gates of the sun, as opening the gates for the Sun-god to come through in the spring morning.

We can understand, now, why the incantation texts call

¹ For the Legend of the Descent of Ishtar consult Jastrow's three works: Jensen, *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, VI, I, 80-91; Ungnad, in Gressmann's *Altoriental. Texte u. Bilder*, II, pp. 65-69.

Ningishzida the "Herald of the Earth," as he is the messenger of the Earth Mother, and also why he is called the throne-bearer of the earth, and the young Sun lifting himself up from the earth. We can also understand his hermaphroditic character, sometimes spoken of as male and sometimes as female, as soon as we realize that the two snakes of the caduceus are one male and the other female—a fact that will be discussed at some length toward the close, as well as in connection with the Tar-ragona tablet.

We now pass to the representations of the independent caduceus as an object of worship or a symbol.

The Independent Caduceus.—From the Gudea group and the correlated representations of Ningishzida it has become evident that the caduceus in itself was a god, and not merely an emblem, in very early Babylonian history. A study of the cylinders shows quite a number in which this independent caduceus appears as an object of worship, sometimes standing alone and sometimes flanked by supporting or attendant figures.

In some cases the snakes seem to grow out of the top of the wand and this seems undoubtedly a later form, related to the Greek caduceus, as compared to the more numerous and early forms in which the snakes' coils have not yet been eliminated but are wound about the whole length of the wand. When the evident connection between the coupled snakes and the Tree of Life is considered and the substitution of the tree for the caduceus by Assyrian art, one is driven to the conclusion that the wood of the wand, so carefully detailed on the Gudea vase, is the trunk of the Tree of Life. That the type with the snakes sprouting from the end of the wand is later, is confirmed by the analogy of the evolution of the anthropomorphic form of Ningishzida, from the figure encased in the coils to the figure with no coils but with the snake-tops sprouting from its shoulders.

In Ward 477 (Fig. 10) is a large caduceus, with central vase and coils wound tightly about the long staff. A hero of the Gilgamesh type stands beside it. The two main figures are of a god and goddess with a curious squatting figure between them, that seems to suggest a veiled form of the divine *connubium*. A similar crouching figure occurs in connection with the caduceus in Ward 424 (Fig. 11), where the nude goddess appears, and in Ward 428, described on p. 196 in connection also with a divine pair. The phallic character of the caduceus is emphasized in Ward

481 (Fig. 12) where a caduceus of the vase type is held up by two ithyphallic genii. An extremely schematic form is shown in Ward 335 (Fig. 13) where the caduceus must be imagined as



FIGURE 10.—(= Ward 477)



FIGURE 11.—(= Ward 424)

erect behind the seated god, instead of at the opposite end, as in the drawing. The connection with the crescent moon which we find here is emphasized in the crude cylinder Ward 1305⁸, where the caduceus shows the pointed end which all undoubtedly had, but which in other cases is driven into the ground (Fig. 14). In another carelessly tooled cylinder, Ward 237, there is a unique association of the colossal caduceus with two bulls backing up against it with fore-legs raised (Fig. 15). This may be compared to a cylinder in Kings' *History of Sumer and Akkad*, pl. opp. p. 76 with two bulls flanking the Tree of Life, and held by Gilgamesh and Heabani; and with Ward 200 where the rampant bulls alone flank the tree. The connection of the bull with fertility is well-known.



FIGURE 12.—(= Ward 481)



FIGURE 13.—(= Ward 335)

a cylinder found in Cyprus (Fig. 17), is an interesting combination of both Babylonian and Hittite characteristics. The hero Heabani has the nude goddess on one side and the caduceus on the other.

These are all Babylonian works. Among Syro-Hittite cylinders we find in Ward 830 an echo of the Gudea vase (Fig. 16). Two human genii are here adoring a schematic caduceus. In Ward 1160, a

The Caduceus in the hand of a Goddess.—Far more numerous are the cylinders where the caduceus is held in the hand of a deity. Evidently Ningishzida, as a messenger, a mediating and



FIGURE.—14 (=Ward 1305a)



FIGURE 15.—(=Ward 237)

secondary god, and as an instrument in the right hand of a primary god, would indicate some important activity of this god. As both chthonic and solar he would naturally express the effect of solar heat on the moist earth in producing new life in the spring.



FIGURE 16.—(=Ward 830)

Since in Oriental thought the moist earth was primary and the solar heat secondary, since the Sun-god was the son of the Great Mother and rose into being out of the earthly waters, we should expect that a Right-

hand Sceptre-god would be placed mainly in the right hand of the Mother Goddess and only in a secondary way in the hand of a sun-god.

This we find actually to have been the case. The caduceus is the common emblem placed in the hand of the Babylonian Mother Goddess, whom we shall call Ishtar, when she is represented as standing. There is no known case of her having it when she is seated. Why this difference exists can only be conjectured. I would suggest that possibly as a *seated* deity represents a *passive* condition, receptive of homage, etc., and a *standing* deity an *active* or aggressive condition, and as the giving of life to nature in



FIGURE 17.—(=Ward 1160)

the spring is an aggressive act, this might lie at the basis of the difference.

But there was still another reason. The single snake, the great earth snake was the primal embodiment of the Mother Goddess as the source of life. This was probably due to its fecundity, love of moisture and its response to the spring heat—characteristics that made it the emblem not only of life but of resurrection.

There are certain passages in the divination texts relating to snakes which show how closely the Babylonians associated them with life and with wealth. The following are taken from Dr. Jastrow's work:¹

"If a snake crawls up a man's foot it means a long life. That man will become rich and will cry out: 'Where shall I house my corn? Where shall I store my silver?'"

"If a snake falls upon a little child and frightens it, that child shall live under the protection of God.

"If a snake lies down on a little child, so shall it, whether it be male or female, obtain renown and wealth, or its father and mother will obtain renown and wealth.

"If a queen bears a snake the king will be strengthened."

As Dr. Jastrow says: "In the Semitic languages the ground-stem underlying the word for *snake* is identical with that of the word meaning *life* and a similar unity of concept between snake and life appear to lie at the base of the widespread belief among Indo-germanic races that snakes are the embodiment of dead ancestors."

In other words we must realize that in practically all ancient thought the snake was the typical life-spirit or *daimon*. That it was passed on to the Assyrians is shown, for example, in an apparently insignificant detail in the notable Assyrian relief of Bel fighting the Dragon, found in the palace of Assurnazirpal at Nineveh. In drawing the dragon the artist has made his phallus in the form of a serpent, so clinching the fact that the male serpent stood for the organ of generation in the ancient Oriental mind. This helps, later on, in the case of the Hellenic Hermes to span the distance between his two emblems—snakes and phallus.²

The lion, and the fruit or flower of the Tree of Life were, besides the single snake, the principal emblems of the Mother Goddess.

¹ *Die Religion*, II, 776 ff., 782.

² Layard, *Nineveh*, II, pl. 5.

This was an idea common not only to Babylonian, Assyrian, and Hittite art but to Cretan, Aegean, Mycenaean, and even developed Hellenic art. So this need not detain us.

Only this much may be done in this connection: (1) to clear up a misunderstanding which has prevented our identifying the fruit of the Tree of Life in connection with Ishtar; (2) to show



FIGURE 18.—(= Ward 428)



FIGURE 19.—(= Ward 1278)

how the lion was not merely the foot-stool of Ishtar but part of her nature, and (3) to demonstrate that the single serpent as well as the caduceus was currently used both as an independent emblem and as an emblem held by a deity, and that this single serpent must not be confused with the caduceus. In Ward 428 (Fig. 18) on the extreme left is a large puff adder of the usual upright type, while next to it, in the upper register, is the caduceus

standing independently on a flat base, and, beyond, the familiar nude goddess as a statue on a base.



FIGURE 20.—(= Ward 413)

standing independently on a flat base, and, beyond, the familiar nude goddess as a statue on a base. In Ward 1278 is a particularly well done single snake backing up against a god whom Ward calls Shamash, probably because he rests one foot on what seems a conventional mountain (Fig. 19). Such a single snake is twined around a pole in an inscribed Hittite cylinder (Ward 796) and held up by a god as his emblem.

Now Ishtar (and her prototype Bau) was the only thoroughly independent goddess of the Babylonian pantheon. The other goddesses were but pale reflections or counterparts of male

originals. Ishtar is the mother of the gods, mistress of the gods, mother and creator of mankind, the personification of fertility, of productivity, the source of all life, the beauty of heaven, the associate of the sun and moon gods, the helper in divination.

In the earlier type, that of the seated goddess, she does not, as I

have said, hold the caduceus, but instead there radiate from her shoulders

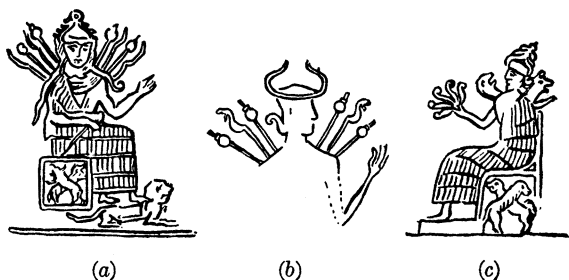


FIGURE 21.—(= Ward p. 377)



FIGURE 22.—(= Ward 685)

hold the caduceus, but instead there radiate from her shoulders certain objects that are emblematic of her power. Sometimes they are a line of straight stems ending in a bulb, as in the relief of the Elamite ruler of the Lulubi (Fig. 20). More often these are in alternation with the upper part of snakes. The bulbs are seen to be identical with the fruit growing on many representations of the Tree of Life which is a common object of worship on Babylonian and later cylinders. It is also identical in shape with the poppy head or pomegranate which alternates with ears of corn in the bunch held by the Greek Mother Goddess. It is logical that the principle of fertility, the snake, and the embodiment of its action, the fruit of the Tree of Life, should be the earliest emblems of the Mother Goddess.

In Figure 21 are some impressions of early seals from Telloh, from Heuzey, of extraordinary value. In *a* and *b*, the Life-fruit and the Serpent alternate in growing out of the god-



FIGURE 23.—(= Ward 763)

dess' shoulder. In *c*, the snakes radiate in a bunch from her right hand, while it is lions that grow from her shoulders. It was easy to mistake such bulbs for the bulbous head of a warlike mace (Fig. 21), but besides the proof given by this identity in



FIGURE 24.—(= Ward 464)

form with the fruit on the tree which can be seen in Figures 22 (= Ward 685), 23 (= Ward 763), we find that the goddess sometimes held in her hand a bunch of these bulbous objects (Fig. 24), radiating from her fingers in such a way as to make it self-evident that no such thing as a mace or any kind of weapon could have been intended (Ward 464: compare Fig. 21*c*). In fact they are the prototype of the aureole with which Assyrian art encompassed the goddess (Fig. 25), whose rays or spokes end in just these knobby fruits of the Tree of Life (Ward 705). The conversion of solar rays into these fruits is shown graphically in the cylinders and admits of no doubt. If one compares the winged genius in Figure 25 who is fertilizing the aureole with Figure 23 (Ward 763) and 28 (Ward 685) where the process is going on under the sun-rays, the connection is evident; even closer is the analogy in Figure 22.



FIGURE 25.—(= Ward 705)



FIGURE 26.—(= Ward 446)

holding a weapon. Evidently here also the bunch is not a weapon. In some cases (Fig. 33) it is more like a two-storied flower (Ward 449); both with the god and the goddess, as when it grows out of her shoulders. The god in these cases is re-

Compare also Figures 29 and 30.

The radiating bunch of bulbs is held also by a god (Fig. 26), especially when he has a prostrate human figure near or under his feet and stands with other hand raised (Ward 446),

garded by Ward as probably Nergal, god of dessicating mid-summer heat, but his identity is quite uncertain.

Then there is the case of the branch of the Tree of Life with its three fruits, held by a god in the important seal of Dunghi, King of Ur (Fig. 27 = Ward 436). The moon-god Sin was chief-god of Ur and it is apparently he who appears, with the king as worshipper. He carries the single snake staff in his left, the wand with three bulbs of the Tree of Life in his right, and in front of him is the vase with two streams of the water of life ending in fronds or bulbs and with the Tree of Life rising in the centre. Dr. Ward says (p. 164) that what the god carries in his right is "a triple club, the three knobs of which indicate its terrible character."



FIGURE 27.—(= Ward 436)



FIGURE 28.—(= Ward 696)

the branch. This branch with the three bulbs is found in the hands of Assyrian genii adoring the Tree of Life: see Perrot and Chipiez, II, Fig. 29. I may be pardoned for introducing here from Mycenaean art (Fig. 30) the famous gold Signet-ring from Mycenae, with the Mother Goddess seated under the Tree of Life and holding the bunch of three "poppies" (?) almost identical with these Babylonian groups of three.

This matter of proving such bulbs whether single or as a branch or radiating from a centre to be part of the Tree of Life instead of weapons, to be symbols of



FIGURE 29.—(= Ward 692)

fertility instead of destruction, and that this is also true of the snake sword, has been dwelt upon rather fully because it radically changes the meaning of many scenes in Babylonian, Assyrian and Hittite art.¹ In fact, it may be said to strike at the root of a very serious misconception of modern scholarship, which lays emphasis upon the element of fear and of destructiveness in its interpretation of ancient religion.²

Returning now to the seated goddess, there are two very unusual features that bear on the previous questions which are noted by Heuzey in connection with certain figures of the goddess in the early Babylonian monuments of Lagash (Shirpurla-



FIGURE 30.—SIGNET RING FROM THE AKROPOLIS, MYCENAE

Telloh), already referred to in connection with Fig. 21. She sometimes holds in her right hand an emblem which on close examination proves to consist of a bunch of serpents: sometimes there are seven, which was, of course, the sacred or complete number. This supplements my previous argument, because it shows that both the emblems that radiated from the goddess' shoulders, serpents as well as tree fruits, were grouped into a sceptre for her right hand.³

¹ Assyrian cylinders are cited side by side with Babylonian cylinders because in so fundamental a matter as the ideas at the basis of the sacred tree and sun-worship, the kinship was very close.

² I expect to show in another paper that this has vitiated a large part of our ideas. Clubs, whips, swords, scimeters, daggers, hammers, axes, etc., must be thrown largely into the discard as emblems and weapons of destruction. Where they do inflict death—which they do much less frequently than is supposed—it is as a rule for the purpose of creating new life.

³ Heuzey mistook the lines below the face of Ishtar for a beard and so thought it was a god instead of a goddess. Ward corrects this error.

The second unusual feature in a rare type is where the lions that are the third emblem of the Mother Goddess, instead of being merely her footstool or the adjuncts to her throne are made to grow out of her body at each shoulder (Ward 421 and p. 377) exactly as the snakes do in the Gudea type of Ningishzida figures (see Figs. 6 and 7). They thus become a real hypostasis of the goddess. They emerge so as to show

their bodies below the forelegs. The lions are repeated, crossed and rampant under the seat of the throne. This has already



FIGURE 31.—(= Ward 212)



FIGURE 32.—(= Ward 414)

been noted under Fig. 21. This scene is made up by Heuzey from a number of imperfect impressions of seals on the Telloh tablets. The type of the standing goddess Ishtar is considered to be somewhat later than the seated type, a creation of the Middle Empire, but hardly later than *ca.* 3500–

3000 B.C. as it appears in works of the time of Dunghi, King of Ur, and Gudea, King of Lagash. The favorite emblem of the standing Ishtar is the caduceus, held in her right hand. A number of typical instances are given by Dr. Ward. In Ward 212, 414 and 417 (Figs. 31, 32, 33) the cylinders represent Ishtar with her right foot resting on a lion, with the caduceus as a long wand in her right, and the *harpê* or snake-



FIGURE 33.—(= Ward 417)

442), with the caduceus in her right hand (Fig. 34). A very interesting scene in Ward 210, introduces a variation (Fig. 35). Ishtar is holding the caduceus with the vase rising between the



FIGURE 34.—(= Ward 442)

snake necks and it seems to rest on a small figure of the nude front-faced goddess Zirpanit in her common attitude of hands pressing her breast. She represents, as I have said elsewhere, the feminine reproductive element in Ishtar. Ramman, the god of rain and storm, is beyond, while back of Ishtar is the solar hero Gilgamesh from whom flow the life-giving streams of water. It is a synopsis of the productive forces. This cylinder is of northern art. The cylinder in Ward 418^a shows Ishtar with a vaseless caduceus and no lions. In Ward 135 the lions under her feet are replaced by two winged dragons. The caduceus in Ward 416 is also vaseless. The wand usually ends in a globe-like bulb at the base and has serpent coils along its whole length except in 418^a. In the two groups of projections from the goddess' shoulders we must recognize, as in her seated figure, the fruits of the Tree of Life. This is particularly easy to identify in Ward 414 (Fig. 32).



FIGURE 35.—(= Ward 210)



FIGURE 36.—(= Ward 440)

The above-mentioned examples cover fairly well the various types of the caduceus-bearing goddess, and show that in this standing attitude she was not a warlike figure but the aggressive Mother Goddess.

The Caduceus in the hand of a God.—

The caduceus was in a few cases connected with other divinities beside the Mother Goddess, that is with one if not two male deities. In Ward's 440, a figure supposed to be the Sun-god, Marduk, the supreme god of Babylon, holds the caduceus in his right and the *harpê* or sickle-shaped sword in his left (Fig. 36). It is impor-

tant to note that the sickle in this case shows plainly its snake origin. It is a snake with curved neck. One can follow the evolution of the sickle-sword from its primitive snake form with long body until in Assyrian art it reaches the straight-handled naturalistic form in which it passed to the Hellenic Perseus. This weapon was that used by Marduk in his fight with the Dragon Tiamat and the powers of Chaos or with the lion, the bull or the bird (Fig. 37 = Ward 615). The god—probably Sin—represented in a cylinder of Dungi, King of Ur (*ca.* 3100 B.C.), carries on his shoulder a wand ending in a single serpent with curving neck; see Fig. 27.



FIGURE 37.—(= Ward 615)



FIGURE 38.—(= Ward 1027b)

There is (Fig. 38) an interesting Hittite cylinder (Ward 1027^b) in which the principal deity advances with raised right leg holding a colossal caduceus in his right and a lowered weapon composed of two separate curving snakes in his left. This latter confirms the serpent derivation of the weapon on Babylonian cylinders which I have called the serpent-scimeter, prototype of the harpê. Facing him is a figure holding two serpents in the right hand. The caduceus in this scene is quite unorthodox. Similarly schematic is Ward 1020, another Hittite work (Fig. 39) where the god, who is fighting a lion, holds the caduceus in his left as well as a pendant animal.¹



FIGURE 39.—(= Ward 1020)

The case for the caduceus in Western Asia may be summed up, therefore, as follows: At an extremely early period, not far from

¹ These two cases make it almost certain that in Ward 1027^a we have not a trident but a schematic caduceus.

4000 B.C., the Babylonians evolved the caduceus in the form of a plain wooden staff with two serpents coiled around its entire length, and they worshipped this caduceus as a god of spring and fertility and as messenger and agent primarily of the Mother Goddess and secondarily of the Sun-god. This god received in certain Babylonian circles the name Ningishzida, and was worshipped in human form as well as under the form of the caduceus. In Assyria and Persia there is no trace of the caduceus or caduceus god, but on the other hand both emblem and god passed from Babylonia to the Hittites and to Syria and Cyprus, and can be connected with the passing from the Babylonians to the Syrians of the cult of the counterpart of Ningishzida, the young spring god Tammuz.

The Hittite Caduceus-god of Hierapolis.—I have left out of the discussion until now what is altogether the most important proof of caduceus-cult among the Hittites: the group of three gods worshipped at Hierapolis in North Syria. This was one of the most sacred centres in Western Asia down to a late Roman period and was extraordinarily conservative in its cult and liturgy. It has had the advantage of a fuller exposition by an ancient author than was given of any other sacred fane. It is in the treatise *De Dea Syria* by Lucian, which can be supplemented by the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius.¹ The Hierapolis triad consisted of the Mother Goddess, who was supreme, of a coördinate yet subordinate male deity, the son-husband, and of a mysterious youth or nondescript emblem. The goddess was Atargatis and she was attended by lions: the god was Hadad and his attendants were two bulls. Lucian calls them Zeus and Hera simply to make them conform as far as possible to Hellenic ideas, but he admits that the Goddess has attributes of several other goddesses. I quote the most pregnant passages of Lucian from the translation given in Strong and Garstang, *The Syrian Goddess* (London, 1913). "There is in Syria a city not far from the river Euphrates: it is called 'The Sacred City' and is sacred to the Assyrian Hera

¹ Lucian was born at Samosata about 125 A.D. and calls himself a Syrian or Assyrian. He practised law at Antioch; visited Syria, Phoenicia and Egypt, was interested in philosophy and religion, visited many important centres of ancient cult, went to Rome for two years in ca. 150, spent ten years in Gaul, returned to the East, travelled through Asia Minor, and settled at Athens. Consequently he is well equipped to describe and interpret any monuments of oriental religion.

[i.e. Atargatis], (p. 41). The great temple is open to all; the sacred shrine to the priests alone and not to all even of these, but only to those who are deemed nearest to the gods and who have the charge of the entire administration of the sacred rites. In this shrine are placed the statues, one of which is Hera, the other Zeus, though they call him by another name. Both of these are golden, both are sitting; Hera is supported by lions, Zeus is sitting on bulls. The effigy of Zeus recalls Zeus in all its details—his head, his robes, his throne; nor even if you wished it could you take him for another deity. Hera, however, as you look at her will recall to you a variety of forms. Speaking generally she is undoubtedly Hera, but she has something of the attributes of Athene, and of Aphrodite, and of Selene, and of Rhea, and of Artemis, and of Nemesis, and of the Fates. In one of her hands she holds a sceptre, in the other a distaff; on her head she bears rays and a tower and she has a girdle where-with they adorn none but Aphrodite of the Sky. And without she is gilt with gold, and gems of great price adorn her, some white, some sea-green, others wine-dark, others flashing like fire. Besides these there are many onyxes from Sardinia and the jacinth and emeralds, the offerings of the Egyptians and of the Indians, Ethiopians, Medes, Armenians, and Babylonians. But the greatest wonder . . . she bears a gem on her head called a Lychnis. . . . From this stone flashes a great light in the night-time, so that the whole temple gleams brightly as by the light of myriads of candles. . . .

“Between the two [gods] there stands another image of gold, no part of it resembling the others. This possesses no special form of its own, but recalls the characteristics of the other gods. The Assyrians themselves speak of it as a symbol [*σημήϊον*, “*semeion*”], but they have assigned to it no definite name. They have nothing to tell us about its origin, nor its form: some refer it to Dionysus; others to Deucalion; others to Semiramis; for its summit is crowned by a golden pigeon, and is why they allege that it is the effigy of Semiramis. It is taken down to the sea twice in every year to bring up the water of which I have spoken.” This attempted description by Lucian of the third image of the group of cult statues in the temple is a descriptive failure, so that the form of it has remained a mystery, for what he says is merely negative. It occupied a central position between the enthroned pair, but it was not a human figure. It was called

by the Syrians "Semeion"; had no resemblance to either of the other figures but represented some of their characteristics. His last sentence is interesting as it shows that the image could hold water and was the means of reconsecration of the temple.

Six quotes the Syrian writer Melito¹ as making Simo the daughter of Hadad, who draws water in the sea [*i.e.* Euphrates] and throws it into the sacred temple chasm. Another legend makes the daughter of Atargatis and Hadad to be Semiramis. On the other hand Diodorus (II, 4) turns "Semeion" into "Simios," a youth who was the lover of Atargatis. Dussaud has proposed to see in Simios the Son-lover of the goddess and compares the Hierapolitan triad Hadad-Atargatis-Simios with the Heliopolitan triad, Jupiter-Venus-Mercury.

The passage of Macrobius is more specific, both as to the original names of the two gods and as to their solar characteristics (*Sat.* ch. 23): "The Syrians give the name *Adad* to the god, which they revere as first and greatest of all;² his name signifies "The One." They honour this god as all powerful, but they associate with him the goddess named *Adargatis*, and assign to these two divinities supreme power over everything, recognizing in them the *Sun* and the *Earth*. Without expressing by numerous names the different aspects of their power, their predominance is implied by the different attributes assigned to the two divinities. For the statue of *Adad* is encircled by descending rays, which indicate that the force of heaven resides in the rays which the sun sends down to earth: the rays of the statue of *Adargatis* rise upward, a sign that the power of the ascending rays brings to life everything that the earth produces.³ Below this statue are the figures of lions, emblematic of the earth; for the same reason that the Phrygians so represent the Mother of the Gods, that is to say, the earth, borne by lions."

Cumont⁴, in discussing the formation of triads in the evolution of oriental local cults, especially in Syria, says: "To the primitive

¹ Six, in *Num. Chron.* 1878, p. 119-120.

² This is, of course, an error on the part of Macrobius, so far as Hierapolis is concerned, where the goddess was supreme and the god quite secondary: a relation quite general in Asia Minor and Syria.

³ Rather does it symbolize the universal ancient belief in the origin of the Sun from the earth.

⁴ *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism*, pp. 123, 250: cf. Perdrizet, *Rev. Etudes anc.* III, 1901, p. 258: Dussaud, *Notes de Mythologie syrienne* (Paris, 1903), p. 24, 115; Jalabert, *Mélanges fac. orient. de Beyrouth*, I, 1906, pp. 175 ff.

couple of the Baal and the Baalat a third member was added in order to form one of those triads dear to Chaldean theology. This took place at Hierapolis as well as at Heliopolis, and the three gods of the latter city, Hadad, Atargatis and Simios, became Jupiter, Venus and Mercury in Latin inscriptions."

We have, then as the third figure of the Hierapolitan triad, a youthful person, sometimes thought of as male, sometimes as female, offspring and lover of one or both of the principal deities.

That some part in the ancient cult was taken by a youthful god or hero who stood in some intimate relation to the Mother Goddess is also certified by the various traditions as to the founding of the temple reported by Lucian. Its antiquity is claimed in the story of its foundation by Deucalion—Xithuthros after the Flood; or by Semiramis in honor of the fish goddess Derceto (=Atargatis); or by Attis in honor of Rhea, whose sacred mysteries he taught to the Phrygians, Lydians, Samothracians, etc.; or by the youthful Dionysus in honor of his "step-mother" Hera, to whom he dedicated the two enormous phalli that Lucian saw in front of the temple. The story that Lucian relates of the building of the second temple by a handsome youth named Combabus for the Assyrian queen Stratonice, hinges about his castrating himself to avoid scandal and the consequent custom of castration at the shrine. This story seems based on the legends of Ishtar and Tammuz, Cybele and Attis, Astarte and Adonis, etc. It is of interest mainly in its bearing on the local question of the third deity of the Heliopolitan triad.¹

¹ After the "Semeion" Lucian describes other statues in the temple, which are of real interest as helping to understand the character of the local cult: (1) a throne for the Sun-god, without any image; (2) Behind the throne a statue of Apollo, unusual because bearded and robed; (3) Behind Apollo a statue of Atlas; and (4) behind that a statue of Hermes and Eilithya. To supplement the brief description of the Apollo we have the passage in the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius (I, XVII, § 66, 77) who says: "The Hierapolitans, a Syrian people, assign all the powers and attributes of the Sun to a bearded image which they call Apollo. His face is represented with a long pointed beard, and he wears a *calathos* on his head. His body is protected with a breastplate. In his right hand he holds upright a spear, on the top of which is a small image of Victory; in his left is something like a flower. From the top of his shoulders there hangs down behind a cloak bordered with serpents [*i.e.*, an aegis]. Near him are eagles, represented as in flight: at his feet is the image of a woman, with two other female forms right and left; a dragon enfolds them with his coils." One is tempted to see in this description a corrupt passage which originally described a caduceus-deity flanked by two adorers. Frazer and Garstang are probably right in the equation Apollo = Sandan = Attis.

The key to the mystery is supplied by a Roman coin of Hierapolis of the third century which reproduces the group of cult statues who are identified as such beyond question by the inscription ΘΕΩΙ CYPIAC ΙΕΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΩΝ "The gods of Hierapolis of Syria." This type was struck at Hierapolis with slight variations under Caracalla and Alexander Severus.¹ This coin is enlarged in Figure 40. The supremacy of Atargatis is indicated by the lion at the base. We recognize the goddess with her lions on the right, and the god with his bulls on the left. The stiffness of the images would indicate an early date. In the centre is the mysterious Semeion, Simi or Simios. We see what



FIGURE 40.—THE TRIAD OF SYRIAN GODS OF HIERAPOLIS (Coin of Third Cent. A.D.)

is evidently a tabernacle with gable and roof. On top perches the dove, as Lucian describes. Inside stands a staff encircled by what seem at first glance to be four circles or wreaths. Numismatics have more or less half-heartedly accepted the opinion of Six that this is a Roman standard or legionary eagle. No archaeologist can agree to this after reflecting for a moment on the absolute impossibility of supposing a Roman standard to have been substituted

for a god in the *sanctum sanctorum* of so holy and ancient a city as Hierapolis. Besides, there is in this image not the least resemblance to Roman standards or to their commonly known coin types. The fact of the matter is that the circles are not the solid medallions of Roman standards but are serpent coils. The shadows and lines show that there is a continuity and not a solu-

¹ Six, in *Numismatic Chronicle*, 1878, p. 119; Pellerin, *Mélange*, I, p. 189, pl. VIII, 12; *Numi vet.*, pt. II, tab. III, 2; Imhoof, *Griech. Münz.*, p. 759, No. 772; Strong and Garstang, *The Syrian Goddess* (London, 1913, pl. I, and Fig. 7). The enlarged cut in Fig. 7 of the latter work is quite inaccurate in the details of the central part, making complete circles with shadows that do not exist on the coin, in order to make it seem like a Roman Standard.

tion of the curved lines.¹ The third figure, then, is evidently a caduceus-god, worshipped in almost exactly the form in which he appeared on the Gudea vase.

We can now appreciate that the Heliopolitan trinity of Zeus—Aphrodite—Hermes, is so truly, as Dussaud suggests, the analogue of the Hierapolitan, that we can say Simios = Hermes.²

Also we can see, from the description in Macrobius, how Simios would naturally be the spring sun. Remember that the statues of both Atargatis and Hadad had solar rays; that those of Atargatis shot upward and those of Hadad shot downward. In other words, that the sun was born out of the earth before gaining the power to react upon it. Simios symbolized perhaps the mingling of the emanations from the two principles.

The Phœnician Tablet of Tarragona.—There is in the museum of Madrid a polychromatic Phœnician tablet³ in which Milani sees the *connubium* of the two primordial deities, or, as he puts it, the *ἱερός γάμος* of Baal and Tanit, the supreme Phœnician gods (Fig. 41). Notwithstanding the fragmentary condition of the tablet it is evident that it was circular, representing the cosmos, surrounded by water, with fish, birds (?) and snakes. Within the border are the sun [moon], and stars. Below are two palm trees, the staminate male palm and the pistillate female palm. Beyond them are the two snakes, both erect and winged; the male snake, horned and with butterfly wings near the male tree, and the female snake, with a line of teats and bird wings near the female tree. A wing on the left shows there were birds. Flames issue from the earth in the centre. The central group consists of two figures, the male on the right, and the female on the left. By their interaction they are producing life

¹ The drawing from which my Figure 40 is reproduced was made without preconception by a clever miniature artist whose trained eye can be depended upon. The drawing from the coin in Garstang not only changes the real outlines—unconsciously of course—but adds some ball-like excrescences which do not exist in the coin.

² Hermes in the form of a boy seems to be represented, at his birth, on a Palmyrene altar to the Sun-god. The boy is born from the cleft of a cypress tree, from which he half emerges, holding a ram with both hands, a youthful Hermes Kriophoros. The fact that this figure has been called Attis and Adonis merely emphasizes the essential connection, which should be extended to Osiris, Tammuz, etc.

³ Ladelei, in *Atti dell'Accad. pontif.* t. 38, 4, February 1885; Milani, *Studi e materiali*, I, Fig. 4, pp. 37-39.

from two sources: the sperma issuing from the body of Baal, passing to and out of the body of Tanit in a concentric spiral motion which finally centres in a human-face embryo. The spiral fluid is inhabited by moving animal corpuscles and is being nourished by milk flowing from the breast of Tanit, whose body is wrapped in decorative zones similar to those on the well-known figures of the Diana of Ephesus. This represents the element of moisture. The element of heat is represented by the flames springing from the earth and diffusing warmth through the vital protoplasms.



FIGURE 41.—THE ORIGIN OF LIFE: PHOENICIAN TABLET AT MADRID.

The second form of vital interaction is more spiritual and is represented by the flying bodies that pass between the open mouths of the two human figures, or rather from Baal to Tanit. They are in the form of alternating small winged creatures and tiny globular objects. As the first form of intercourse referred to the creation of the material universe, this second form evidently symbolises the creation of the soul. It is a well-known fact that in practically the entire ancient world "soul" and

"breath" were synonymous and also that the soul's emblem was often the butterfly.

It is allowable, I think, to infer that in the scheme of the origin and recurrence of life expressed in this Phoenician monument, all terrestrial life—of plants and animals—is due to the union at the beginning of the universe of the two principles of heat and moisture individualized in the two human figures. This Babylonian scheme, therefore, which was treated on pp. 187ff., appears to have survived in Syria and Phoenicia to a late date, because we can hardly date this tablet from a period much earlier than

the Alexandrian age. Baal and Tanit are merely names for the two supreme gods that correspond to the Babylonian pair.

This Phoenician tablet is particularly valuable in being the counterpart of the Hierapolitan triad in the sense that it shows the cosmogonic side of the Oriental scheme of the universe while the Hierapolitan group expresses the same idea from the theological point of view, though the third figure is an archaic cosmogonic survival which had been in most other forms of the cult sloughed off in favor of a purely anthropomorphic form of the triad.

This brings us to the end of the Oriental evolution of the caduceus. The next and concluding paper will take us to Italy at a very early date and will show the caduceus as the house-god of the early Latins and of primitive Rome; and the Etruscans as having brought to Italy the Hittite and Babylonian caduceus-god

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P. S.—Since going over the first proof I have read the careful study of the Heiropolitan deities and coins in A. B. Cook's *Zeus*, I, pp. 582-589. He reproduces not only the coin-type I have used but (Fig. 448) the coin of Caracalla with the figures in smaller size and an eagle below in place of a lion. Of the central "figure" he says: "This sceptre or standard is neither "anthropomorphic nor theriomorphic, but the four medallions, "if such they are, that are hung upon it may well have borne "the effigies of the temple-deities. On the whole it seems "probable that a royal sceptre or standard enclosed in a shrine "of its own, was the central object of worship." This is but a variant of the Roman Standard theory. As we have seen, the object *is* theriomorphic.